

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-06

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INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

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AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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LIMDIS

EO 1162: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, IS

SUBJECT: ISRAELI-LEBANESE RELATIONS

1. I CALLED ON FON MIN TAQLA YESTERDAY, JANUARY 9, TO DISCUSS NEWSTOUR, SENATOR PERCY'S AND DAVID ROCKEFELLER'S VISIT. AT OUTSET OF CONVERSATION I REFERRED TO FRANGIE-ASAD MEETING AT CHTAURA ON JAN 7 AND COMPLIMENTED HIM. FON MIN CONFIRMED WHAT KHALIL HADDAD HAD TOLD EMBOFF (BEIRUT 328). HE THEN WENT ON TO DECRY ISRAELI ACTIONS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. HE PERSONALLY IS CONVINCED THAT ISRAEL IS NOT REPEAT NOT PLANNING TO INVADE OR TO ANNEX SOUTHERN LEBANON. HE RECOGNIZES, HOWEVER, THAT ISRAEL MIGHT TRANSIT SOUTHER LEBANON IN CASE OF HOSTILITIES TO OUTFLANK SYRIAN POSITIONS ON THE GOLAN. THIS, HOWEVER, WOULD BE UNDERTAKEN ONLY IN TIME OF WAR AND FON MIN IS PERSONALLY OPTIMISTIC THAT WAR CAN BE AVOIDED.

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2. HE, HOWEVER, IS DEEPLY CONCERNED RE POLITICAL REPEAT

POLITICAL REACTIONS TO CONTINUED ISRAELI HARRASSMENT IN SOUTHERN LEBANESE TERRITORY. WHILE HE REGRETS LIVES LOST AND PROPERTY DAMAGE, HE MINIMIZES THESE LOSSES WHEN COMPARED TO THE POLITICAL DAMAGE THAT COULD RESULT BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY AS FAR AS THE LEBANON IS CONCERNED. THESE POLITICAL LOSSES IN TAQLA'S VIEWS ARE BASICALLY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE TO WHAT HE UNDERSTANDS ISRAEL IS TRYING TO ACHIEVE AND HE DESCRIBED THEM ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES.

3. IRRESPONSIBLE LEBANESE POLITICIANS, AND HE INCLUDED AMONG THEM SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE KAMAL ASSAD, ARE IN THE MOST OPPORTUNISTIC MANNER ATTACKING THE GOL FOR NOT SEEKING ACTIVELY NOT ONLY WEAPONRY BUT ALSO ARAB MILITARY PERSONNEL TO ASSIST IN THE DEFENSE OF SOUTHERN LEBANON. KAMAL ASSAD AND OTHERS, EVEN INCLUDING THE "WISE AND MODERATE" IMAM MUSA SADR, ARE OUTBIDDING THEMSELVES IN ATTACKING THE GOVERNMENT, WHICH IS DETERMINED TO AVOID AT ALL COSTS THE STATIONING OF ARAB FORCES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON OR AN IRRATIONAL INCREASE IN LEBANESE WEAPONRY IN THAT ARE. THIS POSITION IS THE ESSENCE OF THE GOL'S STANCE AND WERE IT TO BE MODIFIED, IT WOULD BE THE END OF LEBANON AS WE KNOW IT TODAY.

4. INTERNATIONALLY, HOWEVER, THE LEBANON IS UNDER TREMENDOUS PRESSURE FROM THE ARAB STATES TO MODIFY THE POSITION AND EVEN SUCH "MODERATE" STATES AS SYRIA AND EGYPT ARE INCREASING THEIR PRESSURE AND ARE USING INTERNAL, IRRATIONAL LEBANESE AS THEIR VEHICLE. AGAIN, THE GOL IS DETERMINED TO RESIST THESE PRESSURES AND SUCCEEDED RATHER DRAMATICALLY AT CHTAURA IN THIS ENDEAVOR. HOWEVER, THE PRESSURES ARE MOUNTING AND IF ISRAEL CONTINUES ITS ATTACKS, TAQLA DOES NOT KNOW HOW LONG THE CURRENT GOL POLICY CAN BE MAINTAINED.

5. I ASKED TAQA IF HE HAD EVER DISCUSSED THE FOREGOING WITH ARAFAT. HE RESPONDED IN THE NEGATIVE, POINTING OUT THAT EVEN ARAFAT DID NOT GRASP THE NUANCE OF HIS REASONING. EVEN IF ARAFAT PERSONALLY WERE TO
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BE CONVINCED, TAQLA SAID HE WAS CERTAIN ARAFAT COULD PREVAIL UPON HIS LESS MODERATE COHORTS. TAQLA PERSONALLY IS OPPOSED TO TERRORISM IN ISRAEL. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT WHILE FRANGIE HAS REPEATEDLY POINTED THIS OUT TO ARAFAT, HE DOES NOT REPEAT NOT BELIEVE THAT IT WILL DIMINISH DRAMATICALLY. HE HOPES THERE WILL BE SOME REDUCTION BUT ADMITTED THAT THESE HOPES MIGHT BE IN VAIN.

6. TAQLA CONCLUDED BY IMPLORING THAT DURING ALLON'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON THE SECRETARY RAISE THIS ISSUE. HE BELIEVES IT IS CRITICAL, NOT ONLY FOR THE LEBANON, BUT ALSO IN THE BROADER ARAB CONTEXT, FOR IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE LEBANON OVERTLY TO BREAK WITH THE ARABS. IF TERRORISM ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER CONTINUES TO SPIRAL, TAQLA IS CONVINCED THAT THE OUTCOME WILL BE NEITHER IN ISRAEL'S BASIC INTERESTS AND CERTAINLY NOT IN THOSE OF THE LEBANON.
GODLEY

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